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FOUR HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF TYNDALE'S NEW TESTAMENT



An account of the life, service and martyrdom of
William Tyndale, with special reference to his
translation of the New Testament into English in 1525

Leading Dates

- 1382 Wycliffe's Bible completed.
- 1384 Death of Wycliffe.
- 1484* Birth of Tyndale.
- 1498 Erasmus at Oxford.
- 1509 King Henry VIII ascends throne.
- 1512 Tyndale graduates B.A. at Oxford.
Later he proceeds to Cambridge and Gloucestershire.
- 1517 Luther's thesis against Indulgences.
- 1521 Henry VIII denounces Luther.
- 1523 Tyndale goes to London.
- 1524 Tyndale sails to Hamburg.
- 1525 Tyndale publishes his New Testament.
- 1530 Tyndale publishes his Pentateuch.
- 1531 Tyndale's Jonah appears.
- 1535 Tyndale publishes a revised New Testament.
He is arrested at Antwerp and imprisoned in the Castle of
Vilvorde.
Coverdale's Bible appears.
- 1536 Tyndale is martyred.
- 1537 Matthew's and Coverdale's Bibles licensed.
- 1539 The Great Bible published.
- 1557 The Geneva New Testament.
- 1560 The Geneva Bible.
- 1568 The Bishops' Bible.
- 1582 The Rheims (Douai) New Testament.
- 1610 The Douai Old Testament.
- 1611 The King James Version.

*Circa.

FOREWORD

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ALL the Protestant Churches of America are asked to set aside December 6th as Bible Sunday. If this date is not convenient for some churches, it is hoped that they will observe the occasion on some Sunday near that time. The theme selected is "The Four Hundredth Anniversary of the publication of William Tyndale's Translation of the New Testament into English." Our desire is to pay tribute to the memory of this scholar and martyr, and to recall the rich inheritance which the world has in the Open Bible. The facts in this paper have been carefully assembled to assist all who wish to prepare material for use in connection with this subject. It is not possible to give extended references to other works dealing with this topic; but encyclopedias, works on the history of the New Testament translations, and special articles in various magazines and periodicals will give additional information. Three small books dealing exclusively with William Tyndale and his translation of the New Testament may be listed:

"The Life and Work of William Tyndale," by Rev. W. B. Cooper, M.A., D.D., Toronto, Canada. Longmans, Green & Co., 210 Victoria Street, Toronto, Canada.

The American Bible Society has taken an edition of 1,000 copies of this book, and is prepared to send it postpaid for 25 cents per copy.

"William Tyndale—A Dramatization," by Elizabeth Miller Lobingier. A play for 25 characters. (Reprinted from *International Journal of Religious Education*.) 10 cents per copy. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois.

"William Tyndale—The Translator of the English Bible," by William Dallmann. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.

It is hoped that the occasion may be widely observed in the churches and Sunday schools throughout the nation. In limited quantities additional copies of this pamphlet may be had on request. An illustrated Tyndale leaflet has been prepared for distribution in the pews, and may be had in quantities without cost.

AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

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The Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Publication of William Tyndale's Translation of the New Testament into English

THIS year of grace, 1925, completes the fourth long century since a certain scholar and martyr called William Tyndale published the earliest edition of the New Testament to be translated direct from the original Greek and printed in the English language. Wherever the English language is spoken, therefore, this centenary should be celebrated with gratitude, reverence, and enthusiasm. In universities, colleges and schools, and in churches, the achievement of William Tyndale, his unerring mastery over the speech of our race, whether ancient or modern, and, above all, his dauntless heroism during a life of danger, may be recalled at divine service and at public meetings. And the civilization to which he supplied so creative an inspiration as a Bible in the vernacular, will dedicate its energies again, let us hope, to that worship of God, that service of man, wherein he set us an example at once conspicuous and lovable. For the right to read the Scriptures, and the opportunity of so doing, Tyndale made the supreme sacrifice. And while, in the English-speaking world, the fight he fought so bravely is won, let us not overlook the fact that, within the last year or two, prejudice has thrown the vernacular Bible into the flames, and has slain the humble yet intrepid martyrs who lived only in order to bring the Bible, as did Tyndale, to the common people. The least that we can do, who are not called upon to en-

dure such pains, is to value the Bible for ourselves and others; to know it thoroughly; to obey its precepts, and to promote its widespread dissemination throughout the world.

Most events recorded by the historian are like a metal,—say iron,—which gushes molten from the white heat of a furnace, but afterwards cools, hardens, and remains in the fixed shape of the mould into which it was poured. But this event,—the translation of the New Testament by Tyndale and its printing in English,—is to be compared rather with the discovery of radium, a substance indeed small in material dimensions, but perennially dynamic with a power that cures the cancer of disease and restores the body to health. What William Tyndale did four hundred years ago was not a single and completed act. His deed continues unto this day to inspire and to energize other doings. As he translated much of the Bible into one language, so is the Bible now translated into nearly eight hundred “vulgar” versions, of which at once the number, the quality, and the extent are developed every year.

Of England's zeal for the Bible in that dark era, there is no natural explanation. The Book is not of English, not even of European origin. Every syllable within its covers was inscribed in the first instance by the pen of a Jew, the ancestor of a race then despised and maltreated. The genius

of England was not ashamed to put on paper the thought that was higher than its own. And if English is today more nearly the universal language than any other, it may well be because our forefathers, in their piety, thus stooped to conquer. It

was as an exile, in 1525, that Tyndale translated his Testament into the mother tongue. Yet, fourteen years later, King Henry VIII was ordering what was in substance that same translation to be read in churches throughout the realm.

The Bible in England before Tyndale

TODAY it is the King James or Authorized Version of the Scriptures that we are accustomed to read. And we are apt to suppose that we owe our Bible to divines, meeting at Oxford, Cambridge and Westminster during the early years of the seventeenth century, and laboring under the friendly patronage of their sovereign. *Three-fourths* of that final version was, however, the work of William Tyndale, whom prelates ostracized and kings surrendered to a dreadful doom. It was to no Hampton Court Conference that we owe the Bible which we read. Courts only approved after the battle had been won and the price paid.

When William Tyndale set himself to his task, the mass of the people were wholly unfamiliar with the Scriptures. Of conditions in the sixteenth century, Bishop Hooper, the martyr, has given us a vivid glimpse. In the diocese of Gloucester, there were 311 clergy. Of these, 168 were unable to repeat the Ten Commandments, and 31 did not know where the Ten Commandments came from. Forty could not recite the Lord's Prayer, and about the same number were unaware who was the author of "Our Father." It was in Gloucestershire that Tyndale was born; and it was there that he formed the resolution to translate the Scriptures.

The question whether the people should be permitted a free access to the Bible was, then as now, keenly debated. There were

ecclesiastics who threw a vernacular Bible into their bonfires of heretical books. Others, like Erasmus, took a more liberal view. "I totally dissent," said he, "from those who are unwilling that the Sacred Scriptures, translated in the vulgar tongue, should be read by private individuals. I would wish even all women to read the Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul. I wish they were translated into all languages of the people. I wish that the husbandman might sing parts of them at his plough, and the weaver at his shuttle, and that the traveler might beguile with their narration the weariness of his way."

When the ecclesiastics argued with Tyndale, his attitude was the attitude of Erasmus. To one erudite disputant, the translator retorted: "If God spare my life, ere many years I shall cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost."

Not that Tyndale was a man of contention. It was his object to spread light rather than to arouse heat. The edition of his New Testament which he issued in 1534 contains a "protestation," in which he declares that he never wrote "either to stir up any false doctrine or opinion in the church, or to be the author of any sect, or to draw disciples after me, or that I should be esteemed above the least child that is born, but only out of pity and compassion which I had, and yet have, on the darkness of my

brethren, and to bring them to the knowledge of Christ."

The trouble with Tyndale was that he lived in an age when contention could not be wholly avoided. He met, for instance, the chancellor to a bishop, a man bred a Roman Catholic and imbued with the new learning, who yet could say to the translator, "Do you not know that the Pope is very anti-Christ? I have been an officer of his, but I have given him up and defy all his works." Another ecclesiastic of a different temper would declare, "We are better without God's laws than the Pope's"; and it was only in response to this challenge that Tyndale uttered his famous retort, "I defy the Pope and all his laws." All the evidence is that Tyndale, left to do his appointed work, was a quiet person. Sir Thomas More was no partial witness, but he describes him as "a man of right good living, studious, and well-learned in Scripture." Another witness, George Joye, speaks of Tyndale's "high learning." And after meeting Tyndale at Worms, Herman Buschins, a friend of Erasmus, wrote that he "was so skilled in seven languages,—Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish and English,—that whichever he spoke, you would suppose it was his native tongue."

The task of translating the Bible was thus scholarly and constructive, not controversial. And among the many who assisted in it, Tyndale was an illustrious pioneer. The English Bible as we know it is indeed the product of a literary effort that extends over two centuries. It was as early as 1382 that there appeared the Wycliffe-Here-

ford Bible. In two respects did it differ from Tyndale's New Testament. It was translated from the Latin Vulgate, which is itself a translation; and not from the original Greek. And it was not printed, but written by hand. The Tyndale Version, that appeared in 1525 and later years, thus marks an epoch in religion and in learning. It was rapidly followed by other translations, substantially based upon the Tyndale text. In 1535, the Coverdale Bible reached England, and this was complete. Later, there came the Matthews Bible, based on the versions of Tyndale and Coverdale; and in 1539 the Great Bible. In 1560, the Geneva Bible left the press, and in 1568 the Bishops' Bible. In 1582, the Rheims New Testament was translated from the Vulgate, and in 1610 this was followed by the Douai Version, also rendered from the Vulgate. These two latter translations were published for the use of Roman Catholics; and their existence shows how the Scriptures had become indisputably "the best-seller" in Great Britain. "England," writes John Richard Green, the historian, "became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible." For a time, at any rate, it was the truth.

The idea that prompted Tyndale to translate the Bible was thus simple. It is not an idea that, in itself, involves creeds and ceremonial. While the Bible was to be read in church and interpreted by the clergy, it was to be introduced also into the home, the farm, the workshop, the market-place, and, above all, the nursery. The Book, reserved hitherto for religion, was to be boldly restored to life.

Tyndale's Preparations for His Work

THE translator, William Tyndale, was thus born in Gloucestershire about the year 1484,—precisely a century after the death of Wycliffe. The brief and troubled reign of King Richard III was ending the Wars of the Roses and ushering in the powerful dynasty of Tudor. At an age which seems to us to be strangely young,—his early 'teens,—Tyndale went to Oxford, where he became a student of Magdalen College. In 1512 he graduated bachelor of arts, and he then proceeded to spend a year or two at Cambridge. That was his education. It lasted more than ten years.

To the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, it was possible, even then, to apply the word "mature." But they were not yet the venerable institutions which they have now become. New colleges were rising to influence. Christ Church, Oxford, to give one case, was still being founded by Cardinal Wolsey. And King's Chapel, Cambridge, perhaps the noblest edifice of its kind in the world, was rising in its grandeur under the very eyes of Tyndale. Over Oxford and Cambridge, thus vigorous in their comparative youth, there was sweeping that wave of revived scholarship and art and even of science which has been

called the Renaissance, or the New Birth. In 1453, the fall of Constantinople to the Turks had scattered over Italy the débris of Greece and Rome. From Italy, the classical learning had spread to France, to the Netherlands, to Britain. Dean Colet had been lecturing at Oxford on St. Paul, the patron saint at once of his cathedral and of the still famous public school which he founded. He had, as it were, removed the Apostle of the Gentiles from the stained-glass window, relieved him of his medieval vestments, and presented him as a real man, living in a real world and offering real solutions for real problems. At Cambridge, Erasmus had made it clear that the Latin Vulgate, which was alone available to Wycliffe as translator, was not the original Bible; that the language of the New Testament was Greek. Whether Tyndale ever listened either to Colet or to Erasmus is very doubtful. The important fact is that he breathed an atmosphere filled by them with the ozone of the new learning. The manuscripts from which Erasmus derived his Greek Testament may not now be accorded the highest authority. But it was Erasmus who blazed the trail to what all his successors have regarded as accurate scholarship.

Tyndale Meets Serious Obstacles

IN due course Tyndale left the universities, and during the year 1522 we find him earning his livelihood as the tutor of the two sons of Sir John Walsh, in that Gloucestershire which Hooper was to describe in terms so candid. This home

was the Manor House of Little Sodbury, about twelve miles northeast of Bristol. It was a hospitable home. The table was well-spread; the clergy were welcome. And while the elder of Tyndale's pupils was only six years old, the translator had serious

duties as chaplain to the household and its guests. At dinner, there was discussion of the Lutheran issue, which had split Christendom wide open. And "Master" Tyndale was by no means always in a majority. It was, however, his custom to "show them on the book the places by open and manifest Scripture"; and Lady Walsh was not always happy about it. For abbots and similar authorities she entertained a profound respect. And in her mind the question was whether this young clerk with the Bible had a right to challenge men of greater age and prestige, who met him without a similar dexterity in the use of that two-edged weapon.

The collision between the new and the old was, indeed, inevitable. For Tyndale did not merely converse; in Bristol he preached. And the people thronged to hear him. His sermons, however, were displeasing to the chancellor of the diocese, who issued a summons against the still obscure priest, and in a fit of temper "reviled and rated him like a dog." Such an incident was calculated to disturb Tyndale's confidence in things as they were. He found himself face to face with an apparent conflict between the ideal of an authoritative church and the ideal of an open Bible. And he decided that, if that choice were forced to a decision, it would be for the open Bible that he would give his life.

About the month of July, 1523, he left Little Sodbury in Gloucestershire, and made his way to London. It was a journey to be compared with a trip in these days from coast to coast. And Tyndale carried letters of introduction from Sir John Walsh to Sir Harry Guildford, Controller of the Household, a man of culture, a friend of Erasmus and a favorite of King Henry VIII. Had the issues now pending rested with Sir Harry Guildford, it is possible that history would have been far different from what it became. But it was with the Lord

Bishop of London, not with the Controller of the Household, that there lay the authority to sanction a translation of the New Testament. And without that episcopal sanction, no printer would undertake the work of production.

At first sight, the omens seemed to be favorable. Bishop Tunstall was a scholar in Greek and Hebrew, educated like Tyndale both at Oxford and Cambridge, and like Tyndale a friend of the new learning. He had graduated, too, at Italian universities, and was thus a citizen of the world. To be patron of Tyndale would have cost little and gained much glory for the bishop. For, after all, what was it that the translator requested? Merely a quiet room, some pens, ink and paper, and liberty to con his Greek and Hebrew Bible with the aid of the corresponding Greek and Hebrew lexicons.

Acting on Sir Harry Guildford's advice, Tyndale wrote to the bishop, asking for an interview, and left his letter at Old London House, near St. Paul's Cathedral. In due course, Tunstall received him. Tyndale had with him a translation of an oration by Isocrates, which would be, he thought, evidence of his scholarship; but the bishop declined all aid. "My lord answered me his house was full," writes the translator. "He had more than he could well feed, and advised me to seek in London."

It was a prudent reply, worthy in every way of Mr. Worldly Wiseman. To begin with, Tunstall was but recently made a bishop. And while his mind was broadened by travel and education, he was utterly anti-Lutheran. It was only three years before that the reformer had been excommunicated. And Tunstall had been staying at the very city of Worms where Luther was shortly to challenge the spiritual sovereignty both of the Emperor and of the Pope.

In 1521 Luther was put under the ban of the Empire; and it was in this year also that King Henry VIII attacked "the heretic" and so received that title of "Defender of the Faith," which is borne to this day by British sovereigns, even though they be of the Protestant succession. And the King's pamphlet had declared that "untrue translations shall be burnt, with sharp correction and punishment against keepers and readers of the same."

It was thus at an unpropitious moment that Tyndale appealed for aid to Bishop

Tunstall. Yet, after allowing for all the circumstances, it is strange that he should have been met by what he was convinced was meant to be a refusal. The church, of which Tunstall was an admired ornament, is that same church which now daily recites the Scriptures substantially as Tyndale rendered them into English, and has included Psalm and Gospel and Epistle in a Prayer Book which teems with inspired phrase and is second only to the Bible as England's masterpiece of devotional literature.

Tyndale an Exile

TYNDALE was now without resources, and he became what, in the profession of journalism, is called a free lance. Apparently, he occupied the pulpit at St. Dunstan's-in-the-West in the Strand; and it was there that his preaching attracted his rich friend, Humphrey Munmouth, the merchant, who "examined what living he had," finding that "he had none at all." At Munmouth's house, Tyndale came into contact with traders from Europe. He heard the layman's comment on the momentous struggle which was tearing Christendom in twain. And under these influences he reached an important conclusion. "I understood," so he writes, "that not only was there no room in my lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but, also, that there was no place to do it in all England." Tyndale decided to emigrate. In a true and logical sense, he was the first of the Pilgrim Fathers. For he, like they, sought freedom of conscience, of prayer, of worship, of literature, on the continent of Europe. In May, 1524, he set sail for Hamburg.

The stupidity that exiled him is char-

acteristic of the "absence of mind" which appears to be a part of England's title to distinction. That the same nation should have reared Tyndale and then refused to honor his genius, is an inexplicable paradox. And scarcely less amazing is his loyalty to the land, where he had been blessed after all with no more than a step-parent's affection. So, with ten pounds in his wallet, given him by Mumford, he left the port of London and never again set eyes on his native soil.

It can hardly be asserted that when he became an exile Tyndale was still a poor and insignificant priest. Something about him had attracted the attention of all, small and great, who met him. He was a man who made a difference. And there is evidence that he was watched. Whether he spent the year, May 1524 to April 1525, entirely at Hamburg or visited Luther at Wittenberg, is a matter of discussion. Tyndale's contemporaries appear to be unanimous that the translation of the New Testament proceeded at Wittenberg, when Tyndale was in the very company of Luther. Be

that as it may, the basis of his rendering was the second and third edition of the Greek text prepared by Erasmus. With this as foundation, he consulted the Vulgate

and the Bible in German, translated by Luther. He labored alone; but by William Rowe, his companion in exile, he was served as amanuensis.

The First Printed New Testament in English

BEFORE leaving England he had collected a second sum of ten pounds, and this money he had left with Mumford, the merchant. In the spring of 1525 he sent for this ten pounds and proceeded to Cologne, a city famous for its printers. Here he negotiated with Peter Quentel, who was to furnish a small quarto edition of 3,000 copies of the New Testament, with prologue, references, marginal notes, and divisions into chapters, but not into verses. The word "quarto" meant no more than this: that the sheets as printed were folded into four. The sheets might be of any size, and each sheet was signed with a letter,—A, B, C, and so on.

In the city of Antwerp there is still preserved complete the home and establishment of an early printer called Plantin. The press run by Quentel, though still simpler than Plantin's, may thus be visualized. Printing was still almost as much of an art as the illumination of manuscripts by the monks.

The letters of a "Gothic" type were not yet "founded" of metal, but cut in wood. The actual impressions were made by pulling a lever with the hand; and, of course, Tyndale's New Testament was not the only book for which Peter Quentel was responsible. It happened that he was also producing a work by a certain John Cochlæus, a zealous Catholic known as "The Scourge of Luther." In the rebellion of the peasants, then raging, this man Cochlæus had fled from Frankfort to Cologne; and then by

chance he heard the printers, when in liquor, boasting that before long all England would be Lutheran. Plying the men with drink, Cochlæus learned all about the new translation. And he hastened to report the matter to the Senate of Cologne. In September, 1525, the Senate took action, warning King Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey, and Bishop Fisher. It happened that the almoner of King Henry VIII was Lee, afterward Archbishop of York. In a letter dated December 2, 1525, he also warned the king of the "danger and infection" which would be spread by so pernicious a book as the New Testament translated into the English language, which contagion should be "withstanded." "This is the way," wrote he of Tyndale's task, "to fulfil your realm with Lutherans." And he added, "All our forefathers, governors of the Church of England, have with all diligence forbid and eschewed publication of English Bibles"—in support of which statement Lee appealed to "Constitutions Provincial" and other authority.

Hence the haste with which Tyndale and Rowe packed up their precious sheets, completed as far as "K," and fled from Cologne to the friendlier city of Worms. Here—for the moment, at any rate—they began the typesetting all over again, putting the book, not into quarto, but into octavo,—a term which means that the sheets were now folded in eight pages, and not in four as at Cologne. The prologue and notes were omitted; only a short "address to the

reader" was inserted at the end, and the prudent Tyndale added neither a dedication nor a hint of the authorship. The first edition consisted of 3,000 copies.

The English Bible as we now know it was thus born. And the only question was whether the first installment,—the New Testament,—would live. Would it be possible for authority successfully to suppress its distribution? The question is not so absurd as it sounds. There are classics of Italy which, when condemned by the church of that period, disappeared so utterly from circulation, that not a copy is now known to be extant and the very text has been lost. Of the Tyndale Testaments, six editions, each believed to be of about 3,000 copies, were printed. Only two priceless examples of the octavo edition now survive. And of the Cologne edition in quarto, which in due course he seems to have completed, we have but one fragment,—the "Grenville" pages, discovered about eighty years ago by a London bookseller. The number of these pages is 62, and they contain a prologue, a list of the books of the New Testament, a woodcut of St. Matthew dipping his pen into an inkstand held by an angel, and a translation of the first Gospel up to chapter 22:12. The "Grenville" fragment, when it came to light, was bound up with a treatise by Oecolampadius, the German reformer, and it may be seen in the British Museum.

The period when Tyndale labored was devoted by the English bishops to a desperate conflict with Lutheran propaganda, as they regarded it. On February 11, 1526, which fell on a Shrove Tuesday, there was a solemn bonfire of heretical books before the gate of St. Paul's Cathedral. "And no burnt offering"—so wrote Cardinal Campeggio, the Papal legate, to Wolsey—"could be better pleasing to God." This was the warm fate reserved for Tyndale's unauthorized translation. "In burning the New Testament," so he wrote in 1527, "they did none other thing than I looked

for; no more shall they do if they burn me also; if it be God's will, it shall so be." For these holocausts there was one and only one shadow of an excuse, if excuse it can be called. Tyndale, like Luther, used the margin of his Testament for notes. And to these "pestilent glosses," often derived from Luther, the clergy took angry exception. That some of them were sarcastic cannot be denied. A New Testament translated by a hunted exile may exhibit the scars from which a New Testament perfected under happier conditions is free.

William Tyndale was now much occupied with the task of smuggling his Testaments into Britain. They were included in bales of merchandise, and at once found a ready market. Despite all the interesting professions of liberty and enlightenment advanced by him in his "Utopia," Sir Thomas More was as thoroughly opposed to Tyndale and his work as was the most zealous of the medieval priests. With Tunstall, Bishop of London, we find More at Cambrai, negotiating a treaty between England and Germany, one provision of which prohibited the publication of heretical books. To capture New Testaments and destroy them had become Tunstall's chief aim in life, and meeting a merchant called Augustine Packington, who happened to be in Antwerp, he said to him: "Gentle Mr. Packington, do your diligence and get them (the Testaments), and with all my heart I will pay whatsoever they cost you; for the books are erroneous and nought, and I intend surely to burn them at Paul's Cross." Packington went, therefore, to Tyndale and said, "William, I know thou art a poor man, and I have gotten thee a merchant." "Who?" asked Tyndale. "The Bishop of London," answered Packington. And knowing that the books were wanted for the flames, Tyndale yet supplied them. And so, as it was explained, "the Bishop had the books, Packington the thanks, and Tyndale the money."

Tyndale's Later Endeavors

IN the years subsequent to 1525, Tyndale continued to labor at his task of translating, if possible, the whole Bible and of revising the translation of the New Testament already published. This revision included thousands of corrections. The "glosses" in the margin were toned down, prefaces were added to each book, except the Acts and the Revelation, and the church lessons were clearly indicated. This was the edition that Tyndale presented to Ann Boleyn, who had befriended an Antwerp merchant, Richard Herman, accused of the crime of assisting in "the setting forth of the New Testament into English." The book, now in the British Museum, still shows on its edges the name "Anna Angliae Regina."

And then there fell the blow. Tyndale was living with his friend, Thomas Poyntz, in what was known as the English House at Antwerp, where he was secure of a safe asylum. A certain Henry Philips made his acquaintance and professed friendship. Suspecting no treachery, Tyndale accepted his

invitation to go forth from his retreat, and was seized and thrown into the prison of Vilvorde Castle. That Henry Philips was a Roman Catholic is history. Who inspired the plot in which he was so successful an agent, is not known.

One sidelight on the drama is thrown by a letter which Tyndale addressed in Latin to the governor of Vilvorde Castle. He asks for "a candle in the evening," and complains that "it is weary work to sit alone in the dark." "But, above all things," he writes, "I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the Procureur, that he may kindly suffer me to have my Hebrew Bible, grammar and dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study."

There is evidence that his prayer was granted. For it was in what John Bunyan would have called his "den," that Tyndale appears to have labored on the translation of the books from Joshua to II Chronicles inclusive, which he bequeathed to his friend John Rogers, who in due course was to win, like Tyndale, the martyr's crown.

Tyndale Translated

WHATEVER efforts were made to save Tyndale failed. After eighteen months in his cell, he was led out to suffer the final penalty. On October 6, 1536, the translator was strangled, and his body burned at the stake. Where his dispersed ashes lie, we do not know. Like his words, they are scattered to the winds. But his last cry has been recorded,—“Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.” And a year later the prayer was answered by the king’s

recognition of the Coverdale and Matthew Bibles.

To pass any comment upon the crime that cost the world a life like Tyndale’s would be an impertinence. It was an attempt, with smoked glass, to eclipse the “Sun of righteousness” rising over that beclouded Christendom, with healing in his wings. Tyndale’s English was doubtless forcible. “When ye pray, babble not much,” is how he translates Matt. 6:7. And in Matt.

15:27 we read, "The whelps eat of the crumbs." Also, his marginal notes sometimes hit hard. For instance, in Exodus 32:35, which reads:

And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made,

his comment was, "The Pope's bull slayeth more than Aaron's calf," which pun was witty rather than conciliatory. But even allowing for his free humor, we may say that of all martyrs none excelled Tyndale in modesty, piety, and scholarship. It is amazing to think that the crime for which he was done to death consisted in writing words like these:

I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I have

sinned against heaven, and before thee, nor am I worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he rose and came to his father.

So was the translator himself translated. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And of him, as of Christ, we may add, "wherefore God hath highly exalted him." There is no one man who has done more than he to make known the Word of Life to the sons and daughters of Our Father. And to carry on his work in the intrepid spirit which he displayed, is the call of today. We have Bible Societies, and they are good; but Tyndale had a faith that reached beyond all organizations—to mankind itself. What he prayed for was Bible nations.

The gospel of S. Mathew.

The fyrst Chapter.



Thys ys the boke of

the generaciō of Iesus Christ the so- * Abraham and
ne of David/The sonne also of Abia David are fyrst re-
Abraham begatt Isaac: Chā. heard/ because
Isaac begatt Jacob: that churste was
Jacob begatt Judas and hys bre- chesly promysed
Judas begatt Phares: (thren; vnto them.
and Zaram of thamar:
Phares begatt Esrom:
Esrom begatt Aram:
Aram begatt Aminadab:

Aminadab begatt naassan:
Naasson begatt Salmon:
Salmon begatt boos of rahab:
Boos begatt obed of ruth:
Obed begatt Jesse:
Jesse begatt david the kyng:
David the kyng begatt Solomon/of her that was the
Solomon begatt roboam: (wyfe of vry:
Roboam begatt Abia:
Abia begatt asa:
Asa begatt iofaphat:
Iofaphat begatt Joram:
Joram begatt Osias:
Osias begatt Joatham:
Joatham begatt Achas:
Achas begatt Ezechias:
Ezechias begatt Manasses:
Manasses begatt Amon:
Amon begatt Josias:
Josias begatt Jechonias and his brethren about the tyme of
the captivite of babilon
After they were led captiue to babilon / Jechonias begatt

Saynet mathew
leueth out certe/
yne generacions/
2 describeth the
ristes linage from
solomō/after the
lawe of Moses/
but Lucas descri/
beth it accordyng
to nature/frō na/
than solomōs br/
other. For the la/
we callerh them
a mannes childre
which his broder
begatt of his wy/
fe lefte behynde
hym after his des

Courtesy The Publishers' Weekly

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